

ROYAL HORSE GUARD IN POLISH – LITHUANIAN COMMONWEALTH IN THE VASA PERIOD, 1587 - 1648

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The Vasa's dynasty, ruling in the Commonwealth of Both Nations between 1587 and 1668, had at their disposal – like most European rulers then – private armed forces. They realized different tasks, mainly of military and prestigious nature. Polish – Lithuanian state was embroiled in many wars and armed conflicts with almost all neighbours: Sweden, Moscow, Ottoman Turkey and Crimean Khanate. Sigismund III and his sons: Władysław IV and John Casimir had to cope with rebellious subjects, especially Zaporozhian Cossacks. Royal Guard – rather small in peacetime – during war had been strengthened and became very important weapon in monarchical arsenal.

The Guard troops – cavalry as well as infantry - were subject of scholarly interest since the beginning of twentieth century. Wiktor Czermak and Władysław Czapliński devoted some chapters to that subject, while they were describing Władysław IV's court¹. Professor Mirosław Nagielski played very important role in researches concerning the topic, especially with reference to period between 1632 – 68. His articles are particularly rich source of information about cavalry serving in Vasa court troops². Some very useful

¹ W. Czermak: *Na dworze Władysława IV*, [w:] idem, *Studia historyczne*, Kraków 1901, s. 5 – 136; W. Czapliński: *Na dworze króla Władysława IV*, Warszawa 1959.

² M. Nagielski: *Liczebność i organizacja gwardii przybocznej i komputowej za ostatniego Wazy (1648 – 1668)*, Warszawa 1989; idem, *Chorągwie dworzańskie Jana Kazimierza podczas dwóch batalii kozackich 1649 – 1651*, [w:] *Gospodarka. Ludzie. Władza. Studia historyczne ofiarowane Juliuszowi Łukasiewiczowi w 75. Rocznicę urodzin*, red. M. Kopczyński, A. Mączak, Warszawa 1998, s. 115 – 128; idem, *Chorągwie husarskie*

remarks about Sigismund III's personal guard can be found in monumental monography concerning everyday life on his court, written by Walter Leitsch³. One needs to mention very interesting works of such authors like Jan Wimmer, Henryk Wisner, Michał Paradowski and Zbigniew Hundert⁴.

Three different organizational forms should be discerned in the Vasas bodyguard: court troops, *komput* guard and courtiers squadrons (*chorągwie dworzańskie*). Court troops can be defined as private royal forces, paid from income coming out of the table estates (*dobry stolowe*). It was that part of state domain, which since 1589/90 were allocated to cover monarch's private expenses. Many times it happened, that king was so gravely indebted, that public treasury had to come to his aid and pay for these troops too. They were usually subordinated to Grand Marshal's orders. When he was absent, the command belonged to Court Marshal. During the war, when King was personally in command of his army, he alone judged his guardsmen, but in peacetime marshals were struggling to put a brake on his power in that sphere. Their numerical strength was staying undefined up to 1646, when Diet decided to put the number of court troops on the level of 1200 men⁵.

According to Mirosław Nagielski's definition, *komput* guard was composed of *regiments, officially serving as king's troops, but entering to crown army komput and almost completely maintained by public treasury. The king remained a chief of this forces, a post which was usually very lucrative, but real*

*Aleksandra Hilarego Połubińskiego i króla Jana Kazimierza w latach 1648 – 1666. Przyczynek do badań składu społecznego wojska polskiego w połowie XVII wieku, „Acta Baltico – Slavica”, t. XV, 1983, s. 77 – 137; idem, Gwardia królewska szkołą korpusu oficerskiego autoramentu cudzoziemskiego Rzeczypospolitej za dwóch ostatnich Wazów (1632 – 1668), „Przegląd Historyczny”, t. LXXIII, 1982, z. 3 – 4, s. 207 – 225; idem, Gwardia przyboczna Władysława IV (1632 – 1648), „Studia i Materiały do Historii Wojskowości”, t. XXVII, 1984, s. 113 – 145; idem, *Opinia szlachecka o gwardii królewskiej w latach 1632 – 1668*, „Kwartalnik Historyczny”, r. XCII, 1985, z. 3, s. 549 – 576; idem, *Spółeczny i narodowy skład gwardii królewskiej za dwóch ostatnich Wazów (1632 – 1668)*, „Studia i Materiały do Historii Wojskowości”, t. XXX, 1988, s. 61 – 102.*

³ W. Leitsch: *Das leben am hof könig Sigismund III. von Polen*, t. I – IV, Wien 2009; vide idem, *Finanse i działalność budowlana dworu królewskiego w latach 1626 – 1629/Finanzen und Bautätigkeit des Warschauer Königshofes in den Jahren 1626 – 1629*, tłum Barbara Ostrowska, Warszawa 1999.

⁴ J. Wimmer: *Wojsko polskie w drugiej połowie XVII wieku*, wyd. II Oświęcim 2013; H. Wisner: *Rzeczpospolita Wazów*, t. II, *Wojsko Wielkiego Księstwa Litewskiego – dyplomacja – varia*, Warszawa 2004; M. Paradowski: *Studia i materiały do historii wojen ze Szwecją 1600 – 1635*, Oświęcim 2013; Z. Hundert: *Między buławą a tronem. Wojsko koronne w walce stronnictwa malkontentów z ugrupowaniem dworskim w latach 1669 – 1673*, Oświęcim 2014.

⁵ M. Nagielski: *Liczebność i organizacja...* op. cit., p. 5 – 6.

*command was in hands of colonels and lieutenant – colonels, who very often started their career in the last two Vasas' court troops*⁶. It should be explained, that the term *komput* got used to be explained as synonym of the financial and organizational feature of the state - commissioned army in Polish – Lithuanian Commonwealth. *Komput* guard appeared in Crown army in the last years of Sigismund III's reign, they were exploited during Wladislaw IV's period to become the most important part of the king's forces during the fifties and sixties, because of growing costs of maintaining expanded bodyguard, which could not be sustained by John Casimir. Soldiers, serving in *komput* guard, should not take a part in army mutinies (*konfederacja wojskowa*). When during great mutiny between 1661 – 1663 king's armoured company (*chorągiew pancerna*), commanded by Gabriel Wojniłowicz had joined such mutiny, John Casimir was really furious⁷.

Officially this kind of troops was subordinated to the authority of hetmans, Polish – Lithuanian commanders – in – chief, but any monarch had much to say about its activities and decided about its tasks, for example to guard his person and court. In 1649 John Casimir had created new office, general of King's Guard (*general gwardi Jego Królewskiej Mości*) and entrusted it to leading Lithuanian magnate, Lithuanian Horse Master, prince Bogusław Radziwiłł. It seems, that – according to ruler's intention – new officer may have been commanded not only guard, but all foreign sort regiments serving in Polish – Lithuanian army and - in consequence - such command would have undermined hetman's position. However, John Casimir's idea remained dead letter, because of magnates and nobility's spirited resistance. When Radziwiłł turned out to be a turncoat and enter Swedish service in first months of "Deluge" in 1655, another leading magnate, Jan "Sobiepan" Zamoyski was nominated instead of him, but two years later he resigned his commission and the general's office ceased to exist⁸.

Courtiers squadrons were composed of small units (*poczet*, plural *poczty*), enlisted and commanded by different categories of courtiers. They usually accompanied monarch during campaigns or important public ceremonies, for instance in 1650 John Casimir was assisted by them while he was receiving tsar's envoy, Georgij Gavrilovič Pushkin⁹. King often defined soldier's number and colour of uniforms. Most often units were armed according to hussar's style, wearing cuirass and helm and using lances, swords, sabres, pistols and

⁶ Ibid., p. 4.

⁷ Ibid., p. 7, 100.

⁸ Ibid., p. 61.

⁹ M. Nagielski: *Chorągwie dworzańskie...* op. cit., p. 115 – 117.

arquebuses or muskets. Hussar's type squadrons took a part in Sigismund III's siege of Smolensk in 1609, campaign against Ottomans in Khotin in 1621 or battle of Mewe against Swedes five years later. However, it happened, that courtiers enlisted cossack¹⁰ type of cavalry, like during the war against Moscow in 1632 – 34. In such case soldiers wore eastern type helm, breastplate or chain mail, shield and were armed in sabre, bow, pistols, arquebus and, more rarely, shorter version of lance called rohatyna. Both types of armament got used to be treated by Poles and Lithuanian as native, so hussars and cossacks were regarded as national troops (so called *autorament narodowy*)¹¹.

Courtiers – extrapolating datas from campaigns in 1649 and 1651, waged against rebellious Cossacks commanded by Bohdan Khmelnyts'ki – neglected their military duties toward sovereign. In 1648 – 1649 there were at least one hundred and three courtiers at king's service, meanwhile only twenty four (twenty three per cent of whole group) served during campaign, though one should remember, that losses among participants were grave. Lawyer, courtier and diarist, Jakub Michałowski, had to say farewell to twelve wagons filled with clothes, money, jewelry, armaments and – his most important treasure – books, taken by Tatars. He had to pay his part of huge ransom, which the whole army must give to khan Islam Gerei as a price for its freedom. Two years later, during second Ukrainian campaign, sixty four courtiers' units, numbering 441 horses, participated in fighting, especially in three days battle of Berestečko, though their potential could be estimated on about nine hundred horses¹². However, courtiers' absence during the war was regarded as problem earlier, in Sigismund III's period. In the summer of 1629, in the time of campaign against Swedes in Royal Prussia, so small amount of units had come to king's camp, that Dobrogost Grzybowski's private hussar company had to be added to courtiers' squadron in order to save king's honour¹³.

Many conditions – geographical, political or social – caused, that cavalry was the most important part of state – commissioned army during Vasa period, though it should be remembered, that essential feature of Polish – Lithuanian

¹⁰ It should be remembered, that cossacks, regarded as kind of cavalry soldiers armed according to defined style described above, need not to be mistaken with Zaporozhian Cossacks, members of military community, which arisen in sixteenth century close to Lower Dnieper river and was composed of peasant fugitives from Poland, Lithuania and Moscow state.

¹¹ Ibid., p. 115 – 120; M. Nagielski: *Gwardia przyboczna...* op. cit., p. 116 – 118; M. Paradowski: *Studia i materiały...* op. cit., p. 206; J. Wimmer: *Wojsko polskie...* op. cit., p. 30 – 34; 255 – 263.

¹² M. Nagielski: *Chorągwie dworzańskie...* op. cit., p. 115 – 120.

¹³ M. Paradowski: *Studia i materiały...* op. cit., p. 206.

warfare was elasticity concerning army organization and structure. Partly it was result of necessity to conform army to fighting against different enemies on distinct war theatres, partly because of poor state of public finances. Usually treasure was not capable to maintain troops during peacetime and they had to be disbanded after the war. Cavalry, like infantry, was divided into two separate organizational forms: national and foreign type of troops (so called *autorament narodowy* and *cudzoziemski*). First category was composed of hussars, cossacks and – in the second half of seventeenth century – light (called wolokhian or tatar) cavalry, so called because their soldiers had no protective armour and served according to eastern Tatar or Wolokhian' style. Reiters, dragoons, and arquebusiers were part of foreign *autorament*, because they were armed and organized according western European model¹⁴. Cavalry was very important part of royal guard, and its units were organized and armed similar to these serving in state – commissioned army.

According to the sources, very fragmentary and full of loopholes, during Sigismund III first decades of reign, monarchical security was ensured by two formations: *harcerze* and *haiduks*. Former was composed of usually noble cavalry soldiers, and in the latter served non – noble infantrymen. Though in 1589 ruler dissolved his Swedish bodyguard, because soldiers quarreled with Court Marshal, later he was maintaining small foreign troops, mainly infantry, using his private money. Between 1626 and 1629 soldiers called *leibtrabanten* served the king. They were paid less than *harcerze* and probably most of them were foreigners. *Harcerze* (*stipatores* or *drabanci*) were subordinated to *starszy* (*harcerorum praefectus*) and his lieutenant (*porucznik*). They took solemn oath to serve the king faithfully. They served everyday, usually on horseback and only rarely on foot. According to Treasury accounts, in 1596 there were fifty persons and hundred horses on active service. Later, in the twenties reiters company made an entry to treasury accounts. In last year of Sigismund III's reign his private Treasury sustained about 570 – 600 infantrymen, seventy – two cossack horses and about hundred *drabant* horses¹⁵.

According to custom, monarch had let the guard's numbers to swell during the war and afterwards reduced their numbers, because he could not sustain bigger forces. For example, in 1609, in the time of Smolensk campaign, Sigismund III had at his disposal infantry troop from Masovia, numbering four hundred men and commanded by Piotr Grajewski, one hundred of court cossacks, three hundred royal Tatars – cossacks and six hundred court hussars,

¹⁴ J. Wimmer: *Wojsko polskie... op. cit.*, p. 255 – 272.

¹⁵ W. Leitsch: *Das Leben am Hof... op. cit.*, t. I, p. 268 – 273; idem, *Finanse i działalność budowlana*, p. 21, 51; M. Nagielski: *Gwardia przyboczna... op. cit.*, p. 118.

probably serving as courtiers squadron. Moreover, cavalier (knight of the Order of St John of Jerusalem) Bartłomiej Nowodworski led company of cavalrymen, comprised mainly of Prussians, Livonians and Pomeranians¹⁶.

Wladislaw IV acted in the similar way like his father. He increased guard numbers during the war against Moscow in 1633/34 and afterwards at the time of preparation to conflict with Ottomans and Sweden, which finally Commonwealth managed to avoid. Infantrymen, dragoons and reiters were usually enlisted. King's private purse was not able to sustain such big forces. Having accepted treaties with Turks and Swedes, the Diet denied its permission for new taxes, which were needed to pay for bigger army and guard and in consequence king had to disband most of his forces¹⁷. Between 1636 and 1645 German infantry regiment was hard core of court troops, together with two dragoon and reiters companies. Moreover the ruler maintained Cossack company, which numbered between sixty and hundred horses, fifty infantry soldiers and unknown number of halberdiers and trumpeters. Similarly like his father, Wladislaw used service of noble *stipatores*, amongst them there were probably some unemployed officers. Often King was heavy indebted, for instance in 1638 guardsmen were not paid for more than six months¹⁸.

Ranks of court troops swelled – mostly infantry regiment – between 1645 and 1647 as a consequence of semi - secret preparations to war against Ottomans, which were started without the Diet's permission. Wladislaw maintained even 1500 infantry portions¹⁹. When most magnates and nobility had found out about king's plans, they passed an act, mentioned above, which forbade monarch to enlist court troops bigger than 1200 men. In spite of this prohibition, Wladislaw had at his disposal more numerous troops in last year of his reign. They numbered 1600 – 1800 horses and portions, amongst them dragoon squadron commanded by Teodor Leszkwant (Lessgewang), in strength of 200 – 300 horses, 50 – 100 reiters (*drabants*) under the orders of Jan Denhoff and the same number of royal Cossacks, led by Jan Turobojski. They costed more than two hundred thousand zlotys. Three hundred dragoons accompanied ruler during his last travel to Lithuania in the spring of 1648²⁰.

John Casimir was not able to continue such policy, mainly because of financial reasons. Cost of maintaining court troops was crippling between 1648 and 1655. Between 1651 and 1652 120 thousands zlotys were spent on them, in

¹⁶ M. Nagielski: *Gwardia przyboczna... op. cit.*, p. 116.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 118 – 130.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, s. 123 – 132; W. Czapliński: *Na dworze króla... op. cit.*, p. 157 – 158.

¹⁹ M. Nagielski: *Gwardia przyboczna... op. cit.*, p. 132 – 133.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 140 – 142.

other words twelve per cent of whole court expenditure. Year later expenses reached up to the level of sixteen per cent. John Casimir reduced number of court troops to the level of five hundred men in 1655 and two hundred less during last years of his reign. Cossacks and Tatars served in this reduced forces, together with Hungarian infantry, trumpeters and halberdiers. The rest of the troops entered to state – commissioned army as *komput* guard²¹.

As it was mentioned above, the latter became part of crown army during Sigismund III's last years. In the time of war against Sweden in Royal Prussia, hussars company under prince Wladislaw's nominal command entered service. In fact this troop were commanded by lieutenant Mikołaj Stogniew²². The whole company remained in army, still under Stogniew's command, when prince Wladislaw took the throne after his father's death. During Smolensk war in 1633/34 second company had served in Lithuanian army, led by lieutenant Samuel Drucki – Sokoliński and were disbanded afterwards. Another company, numbering two hundred horses, was led by prince John Casimir during this conflict and reduced then. Having taken the command of Crown Hetman Stanislaw Koniecpolski's hussar company in 1646, king transferred task of command over his previous troop to son, prince Sigismund Casimir. After prince's early death in 1647, John Casimir became its new commander²³.

When he replaced his brother on Polish – Lithuanian throne, he not only continued his predecessors' practice, but consequently strived towards strengthening of *komput* guard. Having mixed two hussar companies: his own and previous royal force, he enlisted a troop in 1648, led by Konstanty Kłobukowski. Six year later, when Moscow danger became imminent, king enlisted another company in Lithuanian service, commanded by Lithuanian Field Clerk (*pisarz polny*), Aleksander Hilary Połubiński²⁴. In the sixties king was formally chief of two hussar companies in crown army, led by ruthenian woivode Stefan Czarniecki (since 1662 he was replaced by his nephew Stefan Stanisław Czarniecki) and Sanok castellan Aleksander Ludwik Niezabitowski. Moreover, he enlisted two armoured horse companies, commanded by Gabriel Woyniłłowicz (since 1663 he was replaced by Stefan Bidziński) and Michał Kozubski. Mentioned forces constituted hard core of king's cavalry regiment, serving as a part of crown army. In 1663 it counted 1750 horses and was composed of thirteenth companies: four hussar and nine armoured²⁵.

²¹ M. Nagielski: *Liczebność i organizacja... op. cit.*, p. 24 – 31, 58 – 59, 102.

²² M. Nagielski: *Gwardia przyboczna... op. cit.*, p. 118.

²³ *Ibid.*, p. 118 – 122, 138.

²⁴ M. Nagielski: *Liczebność i organizacja... op. cit.*, p. 50.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 99.

Cossack – Tatar light cavalry met the same fate. Lithuanian Tatars were bond together with monarchs since very long time. they were obliged to military service as a consequence of royal land possession. They played a role of Grand Duke's bodyguard, protecting his person during travel or serving as post. At least since the time of thirteenth years' war in the middle of fifteenth century, their presence close to the ruler during the campaign can be proved. Such bonds survived to the Vasa period. Sigismund III sent three hundred Tatars, led by Mehmet Puński called Carewicz and prince Eliaasz Łowczycki. Military duties became intolerable burden and caused growing resentment amongst Tatars in the thirties and forties, because the nobility took over many Tatars' estates and many lands were partitioned as a result of inheritance, though simultaneously many Tatars looked for service in crown army. Some officers called themselves "court Tatars' captains" (*rotmistrz dworny tatarski*)²⁶.

There were between one and three hundred royal Tatars' horses in crown army in 1649. Two years later, during Berestečko campaign, it was reported about 120 royal Tatars' horses, in fact commanded by Bohdan Kiński. This troop was classified as cossack company and paid by Lithuanian Treasury. Probably Halembek Morawski and Cymbaj Ułan' s companies received the same status as Kiński' troop. They were as numerous as his troop and served in king's regiment together with four other cossack companies, whose commanders remains unknown today. In 1655 Kiński and his soldiers entered in Swedish service just after Polish forces, which Tatars belonged to, were shattered by general – major Johann Weihard Wrzesowicz in the skirmish of Praszka²⁷. Kiński enlisted new Tatar company in 1656 and this troop were part of crown forces up to 1660, serving in Crown Marshal Jerzy Sebastian Lubomirski' corps. Kiński continued his service in the sixties and after his death his company were transferred to Mustafa Ułan Łostajski. There is an entry in Crown Treasury accounts concerning cossack company, led by Persian in Polish service, Daniel Boubonombek. This troop served as king's bodyguard, but when monarch travelled to Lithuania, such duty was performed by another Tatar company, subordinated to Daniel Baranowski²⁸.

During John Casimir's reign reiters, dragoons and foreign model infantry were slowly allocated – since the beginning of the fifties – to crown army. Such decision concerned Mikołaj Korff's and Friedrich Mohl' dragoons or Heinrich von Wallenrodt's reiters. Their forces received their pay from Crown Treasury,

²⁶ Ibid., p. 32 – 35.

²⁷ Ibid., p. 35.

²⁸ Ibid., p. 60, 100 – 101.

but in fact were subordinated to royal authority²⁹. Having experienced disaster in first month of “Deluge”, when some officers, like Wallenrodt, had left Polish service and entered to Brandenburgian army, John Casimir rebuilt slowly his *komput* guard. Between 1658 and 1660 it numbered three – four thousands horses and portions, amongst them two regiments composed of reiters and dragoons. In 1659 cavalry constituted about forty per cent of whole guard³⁰. John Casimir continued such policy in the sixties, especially during Lubomirski’s rokosh, when he had to face the army, composed of rebellious soldiers and nobility led by disgraced Crown Marshal. In the beginning of 1667 foreign type forces, having belonged to *komput* guard, constituted twenty – one per cent of whole such troops in crown army. Two dragoon and one arquebusier regiments served together with another arquebusier freecompany, what made up about sixty per cent of whole guard³¹.

Taking a part in military activities was the *Komput* guard’s primary task, royal troops participated in almost every campaign during the last Vasa’s reign. Dragoon regiment, led by Friedrich von Mohl and after his demise in the beginning of 1655 by Johann Heinrich von Alten - Bockum may be used as an example and its fate can be seen as reflection of whole Commonwealth’ history during these period. Firstly Mohl commanded dragoon company, having served as a part of court troops, whose strength can be estimated on about 150 horses. His subordinates fought against Chmelnits’ki’s Zaporozhians, for instance in battle of Berestečko. Nominally Mohl were dismissed in 1651 to enlist new dragoon regiment, paid by Crown Treasury. His new troop, which numbered 560 horses, was mustered after the military disaster in battle of Batoh in 1652. Three years later it sustained heavy losses during Lithuanian Grand Hetman Janusz Radziwiłł’s winter campaign against Russian army, having served as Polish auxiliary troop for weakened Lithuanian army. Afterwards monarch called all crown forces, among them Bockum’ regiment, back to Poland because of Swedish invasion. The part of regiment garrisoned Malbork, while the rest accompanied John Casimir during his escape toward southern Poland. Hundred of them remained together with monarch in the time of his temporary exile in Silesia. Bockum’s dragoons composed essential part of John Casimir’s retinue during his return to Poland in the winter of 1656³².

Afterwards regiment was reorganized and one reiter company was added, which usually executed task connected to direct protection of the monarch and

²⁹ Ibid., p. 35 – 41.

³⁰ Ibid., p. 82 – 83 and table 2.

³¹ Ibid, p. 144 – 145, and table 3.

³² Ibid., p.27 – 28, 39 – 41, 57.

his court. Bockum's dragoons suffered heavy losses during winter campaign in 1657, having lost 209 portions (from 940 to 731), participated in successful siege of Cracow in the same year and later were billeted in Great Poland. Then regiment fought together with other troops having besieged Toruń to accompany royal couple during solemn *entrée* on the 1st of January 1659. After some refreshment in Masovia soldiers continued their service in Royal Prussia under Krzysztof Grodzicki and Lubomirski's orders. Next winter they were billeted there and inflicted heavy losses on civilians³³.

In the sixties regiment was reorganized again, these time it regained its feature as pure dragoon force. Soldiers participated in campaign in Ukraine, having fought against Russians and Cossacks' in battles of Čudniv and Slobodiše in 1660, and regiment sustained losses reaching seventeen per cent of their whole numbers. Thereafter John Casimir take it back to Masovia and Podlachia for billeting. Soldiers did not participated in great army mutiny in between 1661 and 1663 and protected Warsaw against confederates. During next campaign against Russians and rebellious Cossacks, waged on the left bank of river Dnepr in 1663 and 1664, they were badly mauled in the time of siege of Glukhov. Bockum was wounded and a few officers perished. When the campaign was ended, dragoons were escorting John Casimir during his travel to Vilnius, where king spent a lot of time. After their return to Poland they turned to be a great burden for civilians in Great Poland. During Lubomirski's rokosh regiment actively participated in fighting, though its late coming to the battlefield of Częstochowa caused royal defeat. In 1666 Bockum's troop was almost annihilated during next battle against rebels at Mątwy. The commander reinforced his regiment and in the first half of 1667 he had under his orders six hundred portions. Then regiment was splitted: some part took a part in queen Marie Louise Gonzague's funeral in Cracow, while the rest was fighting in Crown Field Hetman Jan Sobieski's army against Crimean Tatars at Pidgajci. Afterwards effectives were reduced in half, to three hundred portions³⁴. So one can justly claim, that Bockum's dragoons fought – with mixed results – against every John Casimir's enemy.

Komput guard was used as garrison troops, which were located in the most important Polish and Lithuania cities, similarly like court companies. It constituted king's support in the midst of state - commissioned army. It performed – together with court troops – ceremonial and police functions, especially during the Diet's sessions, when they have could exerted pressure on

³³ Ibid., p. 63 – 65.

³⁴ Ibid., p. 118 – 122.

senators and noble envoys. Both kind of guards protected the king and his residences. Cossacks often served as the postmen³⁵.

Social and national composition of royal guard was diversified, according to troop's kind. Noblemen from Grand Duchy of Lithuania and Poland served in Połubiński's hussar company³⁶. There were proportionately more foreigners and representatives of noble families from Courland, Livonia and Ducal Prussia amongst officers and non – commissioned officers, which served in foreign sort cavalry troops, though ordinary soldiers were usually – since Wladislaw IV's reign – the inhabitants of Commonwealth. One can rightly say, that foreigners constituted about forty per cent of whole number of guard officers. Italians, Germans, Prussians, Frenchmen, Englishmen, Scots, Swedes and even Spaniards – like Diego Villa Logos, commander of infantry regiment – served amongst them. Only a part of officers team was comprised of noblemen, however in the sixties more gentlemen entered into service in foreign sort of troops. It seems, that monarchs preferred soldiers, who could speak German or Italian, had experience and were skillful in military matters. Wealthy merchants, connected to the Vasa dynasty since long time, were accepted too, like members of Giza's (Ghissa) and Baryczka's families. During the "Deluge" many Swedish prisoners were forced to enlist to royal guard and in consequence there was the considerable more foreigners amongst ordinary soldiers³⁷.

Service in royal guard created possibilities for social advancement. Most of comrades from Połubiński's company was nominated to local offices, often very lucrative and almost everytime prestigious. In comparison more rare were case of election as envoys to the Diet. Thirty – three among seventy – six comrades received different kind of rewards, what constituted forty – three per cent of whole group. King was very generous to his lieutenant, Aleksander Hilary Połubiński and rewarded him very often³⁸. Mikołaj Stogniew, long time lieutenant of Wladislaw IV's hussar company in crown army, received as royal grant many landed estates and received office of Crown Master of the Camp (*oboźny*)³⁹. Ruler – have been trying to expand state – commissioned army in case of war, got used to nominate his guardsmen as commanders or higher echelon officers in newly created regiments. Mentioned above Friedrich Mohl

³⁵ Ibid., p. 7, s. 24 – 25, 58 – 59, 102, 176 – 177.

³⁶ M. Nagielski: *Chorągwie husarskie... op. cit.*, p. 86 – 88.

³⁷ M. Nagielski: *Spoleczny i narodowy skład... op. cit.*, p. 63 – 99; idem, *Gwardia królewska... op. cit.*, p. 222 – 223.

³⁸ M. Nagielski: *Chorągwie husarskie... op. cit.*, p. 109, 119 – 128.

³⁹ M. Nagielski: *Stogniew Mikołaj h. Lubicz (zm. 1645), Polski Słownik Biograficzny*, t. XLIII, Warszawa – Kraków 2005, p. 623 – 625.

served in the end of the thirties as a comrade with two – horse unit in court reiters company led by Jan Denhoff, then he advanced to the post of ensign. After Wladislaw IV's death he was nominated as commander of this troop and four years later king choose him as colonel of dragoon regiment in *komput* guard. He performed his new duties for three years, to his death in 1655. Walter Johann Wrangel started his career as an ensign in Ernest Johann Korff's Horse leibregiment and later he become lieutenant – colonel in arquebusier regiment led by Marcejan Chelmski. There were more similar careers, like in the case of Jan Denhoff, Teodor Leszkwant, Marcin Kazimierz Kątski and Otton Friedrich Feltersamb⁴⁰. Many foreigners had a chance to yield noble status, nomination to offices or landed estates thanks to their service amongst guardsmen⁴¹. Sometimes such service became hereditary: voivode of Wenden (today Latvian Cēsis) Mikołaj Korff commanded John Casimir's dragoon guard between 1649 and 1651 and his son Ernest Johann led Horse Lifeguard almost ten years later (1658 – 1663). Similar fate shared Denhoff family, which have been staying in the Vasa's dynasty service since Sigismund III's reign⁴².

Nobility very often criticized royal policy concerning guard. Since the twenties *szlachta* have been looking very suspiciously at foreigners' presence in crown army, demanding to reduce their numbers in officers corps as well as amongst ordinary soldiers. They particularly detested reiters because of high costs of maintaining, higher wages than in prestigious hussar troops and form of recruitment, which let plebeians to enlist. The matter was a little more complicated, considering Horse guard. Initially nobility made an exception for Horse guard and such policy was realized even in the beginning of the fifties, but a decade later, during Lubomirski's rokosh some dietines demanded to disband reiters in guard either⁴³.

Nobility consequently demanded to sustain guard from the king's table estates' income, while Wladislaw IV struggled to transfer a part of costs to public treasury, as was mentioned above, especially, that he was heavy indebted because of loans borrowed in the beginning of his reign to cover expenses war expenses. During his brother's reign some dietines expected, that *komput* guard should be paid not by Treasury, but king himself. In spite of that John Casimir proved to be obstinate and was able to preserve this form of guard, which were used by his successors, especially Jan III Sobieski⁴⁴.

⁴⁰ M. Nagielski: *Gwardia królewska... op. cit.*, p. 211 – 218.

⁴¹ Ibid., p. 208 – 210.

⁴² M. Nagielski: *Spoleczny i narodowy skład... op. cit.*, p. 101 – 102.

⁴³ M. Nagielski: *Opinia szlachecka... op. cit.*, p. 551 – 558.

⁴⁴ Ibid., p. 561 – 563.

Poor discipline, reigning in guard companies similarly as in whole state - commissioned army, caused more intense noble dislike. Some part of the blame could be put on dishonest officers, which were stealing money devoted to soldier's wages and by the way forced subordinates to looking for subsistence everywhere, even at the cost of law breaking. In 1646 noblemen from Wizna territory in Masovia complained about Teodor Leskwant's dragoon company behavior. Soldiers stole horses and bullocks, making peasants' life really miserable. Similar complaints were formulated fifteen years later and were applied to Bockum and Pierre Brion's dragoon regiments, which were billeted in Great Poland. Even armed incidents happened, with soldiers and gentlemen's participation. In 1657 Stefan Kotarski, nobleman living in Pyzdry, located in Great Poland, was to attack Bockum's dragoons, which would been going to be billeted in his estate. Three years later lieutenant infantry company, some Dąbrowski, was suspected, that he had gathered a group of peasants from Liszka village – owned by Benedictine monastery in Tyniec – and begun a quarrel with Mohl's dragoons. Butcher's bill was heavy, because fifteen dragoons were to be killed in this bloody incident⁴⁵.

Royal guard – which essential part was comprised of cavalry – played important role in Polish – Lithuanian Commonwealth in the Vasa period. Foreign presence gave a chance for maintaining links with western European way of waging war and importing precious technical and tactical novelties. Thanks to consequent politics carrying on by all three monarchs officers and – more rarely – soldiers serving in guard step by step became a part of native nobility. However, it seems, that they were too small group to cause some lasting change in usually noble hostile attitude towards foreigners and novelties. Hussar and cossack sort of cavalry remained the most prestigious and popular kind of cavalry, becoming a part of national mythology.

It is very difficult to imagine victorious result of war waged against Moscow or Sweden without guard troops or men, who came from them. One can assume, that guard political significance was smaller than all kings hoped to be. Even in John Casimir's times, who effectively – though shortly - augmented its forces thanks to *komput* guard expansion, was not capable to seize the control over the state – commissioned army and use it as a tool of political reform. Lubomirski's rokosh thwart all his plans and victorious nobility enforced army – *komput* guard as well - drastic reduction in 1667. These success made monarchy and whole state very vulnerable, what a few years later was brutally exposed during the war against Ottoman Turkey.

⁴⁵ Ibid., p. 564 – 572.

